early Netherlandish art, also called **Early Flemish art**, sculpture, painting, architecture, and other visual arts created in the several domains that in the late 14th and 15th centuries were under the rule of the dukes of Burgundy, coincidentally counts of Flanders. As the terms "Burgundian" and "Flemish" describe only parts of the phenomenon, neither can posit for the whole.

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Mater Dolorosa (Sorrowing Virgin), oil on panel by the workshop of …
Chester D. Tripp Fund; Chester D. Tripp Endowment; through prior acquisition of Max and Leola Epstein, 1986.998/Photography © The Art Institute of Chicago

In 1363 John II of France titled his son Philip, surnamed the Bold, duke of Burgundy. By marriage to the heiress of Flanders, Philip added to his duchy, on the death of his father-in-law in 1384, the countship of Flanders. The formidable Flemish–Burgundian alliance remained intact until 1482, when Philip the Bold's great-granddaughter Mary of Burgundy died.

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Flowers, detail from the central panel of the Portinari Altarpiece by Hugo van der Goes, *c.* …
Scala/Art Resource, New York

Philip's capital was Dijon, which he embellished with works of art. In the chapel of the Carthusian monastery, the Chartreuse de Champmol, he planned a dynastic necropolis, and until the French Revolution his tomb and those of his son and grandson could be seen there. Claus Sluter (*c.*1340–1406) was his chief sculptor. Sluter, the greatest realist of his day, carved portraits of the duke and duchess in kneeling positions (1385–93) for the portal of the monastery, and for the garden he designed an elaborate and symbolic fountain known as the Well of Moses (1395–1404/05). Six full-length, life-size, polychromed prophets flank the central pier. Among the painters in service at Dijon were Jean Malouel, Henri Bellechose, and Melchior Broederlam (flourished 1381–*c.* 1409). Broederlam was one of the first masters to explore the use of disguised symbolism in the representation of an ultra-naturalistic world, and in the scenes that he painted on a set of altar wings for Dijon there are several levels of implied meaning.

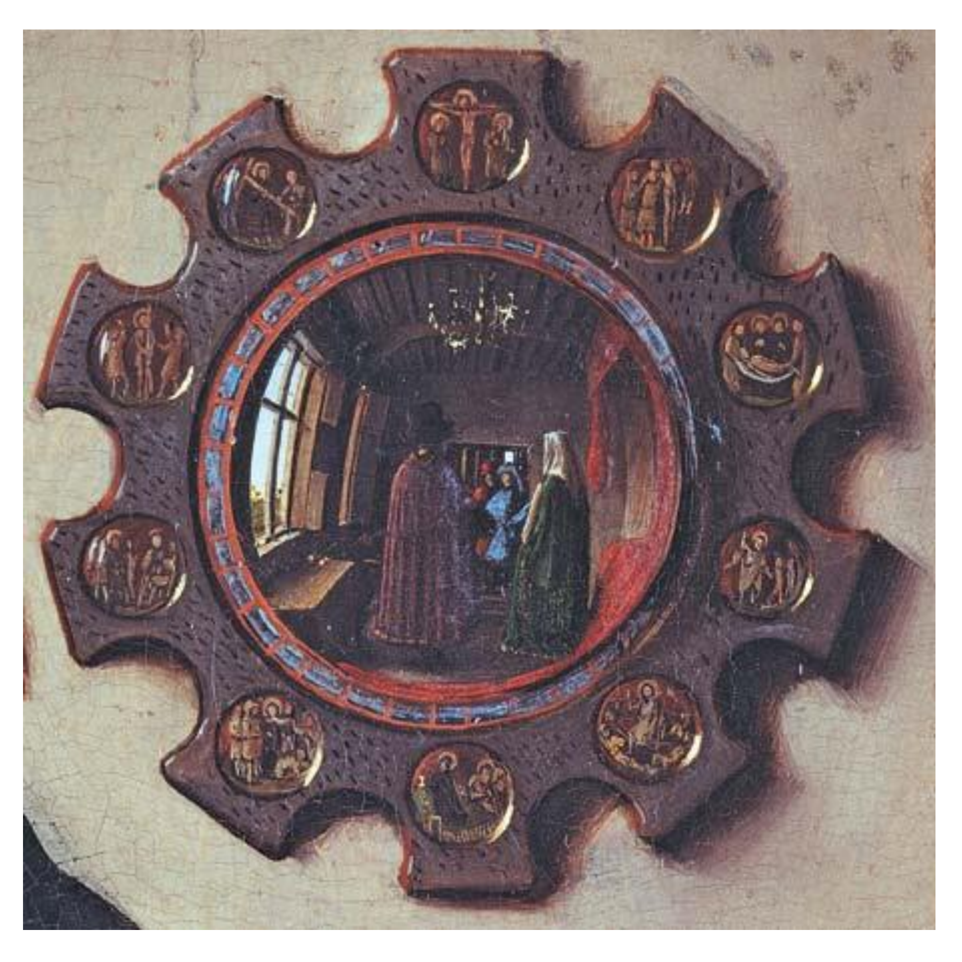
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Well of Moses, marble sculpture by Claus Sluter depicting (from left) …
Foto Marburg/Art Resource, New York

Under the duke's grandson and namesake, Philip the Good (reigned 1419–67), patronage of the arts continued on an even larger scale. Not the least of the new duke's projects was his library, which eventually contained about 250 illuminated manuscripts. Realizing the propaganda value of art, Philip the Good filled his long reign with lavish spectacles such as triumphal processions and elaborate state banquets. Many artists spent large portions of their careers on these "temporary" achievements. The name of Jan van Eyck (*c.* 1395–1441) appears frequently in the ducal accounts. He traveled to several foreign countries, presumably to make portrait and reconnaissance drawings and once to paint a portrait of Isabella of Portugal (1428); the duke approved of the portrait and subsequently married the princess.

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Gothic mirror, detail from *The Marriage of Giovanni Arnolfini and Giovanna Cenami* by Jan van …
DeAgostini/Superstock

Van Eyck perfected an oil and varnish technique that other masters in Flanders adopted, enabling the brilliant colours of their paintings to survive unchanged. Of van Eyck's works, *The Adoration of the Lamb* (also called Ghent Altarpiece, finished 1432), in Ghent, and *The Marriage of Giovanni Arnolfini and Giovanna Cenami* (?) (1434), in the National Gallery, London, were the most important and are the best known. There were many other painters whose works celebrated the wealth and intellectuality of 15th-century Flanders. Van Eyck's most important contemporary was the Master of Flémalle (now thought to be Robert Campin) and, in the next generation, Rogier van der Weyden (1399/1400–1464) of Brussels succeeded him in the duke's esteem. The gentle linearity and movement, reticent sentiment, and soft colouring in the paintings of Rogier were to have a profound influence on the art of neighbouring countries as well as on that of Quattrocento Italy in the later 15th century.



The *Ghent Altarpiece* (open view), also called …

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The meticulousness with which the early Flemish painters recorded nature, their innate sense of design, and their highly compressed symbolism was continued and further developed by their followers. Among the masters who were active up until the end of the Burgundian-Flemish political alliance are Petrus Christus (*c.* 1420–1472/73), Dieric Bouts(*c.* 1400–75), Hugo van der Goes (*c.* 1440–82), and Hans Memling (1430/35–1494).

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Portrait of a Carthusian, oil on wood by Petrus Christus, 1446; in the Metropolitan Museum …
Photograph by Katie Chao. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, The Jules Bache Collection, 1949 (49.7.19)